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AUGUST IS **NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING MONTH** AND DOH-PINELLAS PEER COUNSELORS ARE HELPING MOMS CELEBRATE



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August is **National Breastfeeding Month**, a great time to remind expectant moms about the positive effects that come with choosing this option to nourish their babies. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 75% of new moms start out breastfeeding, but their number goes down dramatically by the child's first birthday.

Encouraging and helping women in choosing and continuing breastfeeding is the mission of the WIC & Nutrition Peer Counselors at the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas). The team of six peer counselors provides education and support to expectant and new moms and they speak from

experience: All have been breastfeeding moms who can speak peer-to-peer with their clients. Two of the peer counselors speak Spanish. For more information on WIC peer counselors, visit their DOH-Pinellas page [here](#).

COVID-19 has shifted WIC services to phone only, but they still offer support for moms seven days a week. Its peer counselors can provide these services at no cost to the client:

- Tips on how to breastfeed comfortably, even in public
- Ways to stay close to your baby through breastfeeding after you return to work or school
- Ideas for getting support from your family and friends.
- Ways to get a good start with breastfeeding
- Tips for making plenty of breast milk for your baby.
- Help with breastfeeding concerns

"Since all our WIC services are currently over the phone, our breastfeeding team calls pregnant and breastfeeding clients," said Robin Booth Watson, an IBCLC who coordinates the team's services. "I can do a virtual breastfeeding consultation over Skype if clients have more complex breastfeeding challenges."

WIC clients can call the peer counselors if they have questions, have breastfeeding pain, or their babies are having trouble latching. They are available by phone from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.,

seven days a week, at (727) 824-6997 to answer questions or resolve issues. Services also include hand, single-user or hospital-grade breast pumps for clients if they need a pump-

WIC—its full name is Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children—works to help expectant and nursing mothers, infants, babies and toddlers develop good eating habits as they learn to use the no-cost items provided on their monthly benefits. Its peer counselors encourage and assist women who choose to breastfeed their babies by providing education, support and resources.

The WIC program in Pinellas serves about 14,000 families each month. Clients have access to many community resources, including health screenings, immunization referrals, dental referrals, substance abuse referrals, and various other social services.

For more information about WIC, go to www.FloridaWIC.org.

For more information about DOH-Pinellas, go to www.PinellasHealth.com or follow us on Twitter [@HealthyPinellas](https://twitter.com/HealthyPinellas).

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